

# Driving a Family Affair

*20 life changing pages*

## Introduction

### A Practical Look at Road Safety

When road deaths and injuries happen, families are directly affected.

People do not get in vehicles with the intention of ending up in a hospital or a mortuary.

If we fail to plan, we plan to fail.

It is my, your and our responsibility to keep our families safe in our roads.



Fig. 1

We all love our families and we should drive with them in our hearts and minds because we would always want to see them again.

**Do you talk about road safety at home with your loved ones?.**

Please start talking about it because it is a subject that concerns you, your family and all of us.

We need to save our beloved who die in their thousands every year. Over **3,000** Kenyans die in our roads every year.

That is over 8 Kenyans dying every day unnecessarily and unlawfully! can you picture 8 coffins every day???!!!

These are brothers, sisters, grandparents, friends, sons, work colleagues, neighbours, daughters loved ones.

For the **3,000 Kenyans** that die, there are over **10,000** that receive life changing injuries. It becomes extremely traumatic for them and their families as their lives change for the worse.

***The simple truth is, all these deaths and injuries can be avoided. They are unnecessary and unlawful.***

The social and economic burden to families and our government is unspeakable. It runs into billions and billions of shillings.

The purpose of this book is for us Kenyans, to make road safety personal by looking at reasons that contribute to road deaths and injuries.

My contribution is to look at **preventative measures** that work and which do not exclude anybody but include all Kenyans as a family.

We must understand that one death a year through the machines we call cars is one too many leave alone the over 3,000 deaths recorded every year.

We Kenyans have the highest road deaths and injuries in the World!

## Our Roads



Fig. 2

We all meet on our roads; the young, old, rich, poor, all tribes, literate illiterate, religious, atheists, the dead, living etc and also there is no discrimination, foreigners are also invited on our roads.

We are so good at dealing with accidents and injuries and even deaths when they happen. 9 out of 10 times its not the Government that rushes to assist the victims of a road traffic injury or death but we the normal Mwanachi.

**We are very good at running to assist the unfortunate people caught up in a road death or injury. We are also very good at visiting them in hospitals and at homes to ensure they are fine and more so that they get better.**

We use our **time, money** and anything that is required of us. We Kenyans can say that we have all been involved at one point or another in visiting, caring and in the most unfortunate event contributing to the funeral arrangements of a family member or friend and subsequently attending their funeral.

The big question I would like to ask is, ***why are we so good at dealing with road fatalities, the injured and caring for them as opposed to dealing with preventing accidents from happening?***

The fundamental truth is ; **we have to be our brother's and our sister's keepers on our roads.**

I would like us to look at this matter in a **different way**. Currently we spend around 90% of our money, time and other resource on road deaths and road injuries.

In my own observation, it more logical and overall beneficial to all of us to use 90% of our money, time and other resources on preventing road deaths and road injuries.

In order to do this we must first ask ourselves a very important question; why do {accidents} happen?

In the scientific world, the term road accident is rarely used and mostly avoided as it implies that there is no explanation for this event whereas we know that the opposite is true.

The term/s road injuries or road deaths would be the right language to use. The seriousness of this language is enough to catch someone's attention and hence makes one to look at the incidents in our roads in a different way.

I have classified what causes road injuries and deaths into several points. However I must say that these are not all the causes as this subject is very broad and deep. However, I know that if we understand these points well enough to prevent them from happening, we would cut off road injuries and deaths by a considerable amount.

## Reasons that lead to road deaths and injuries.

## **Driving licence**



Fig. 3

**To start off, the driver of any vehicle must have a valid driving licence.**

It may seem so obvious that I should talk about a driving licence. The shocking truth is, there many drivers who do not have a licence or if they have it is fake.

These drivers combined with the issues I will address below make our roads the most unsafe.

## **Sick, Tired, or On Medication**

If you are sick or tired, **please do not drive.**

Your concentration will be greatly reduced. Some prescription medication makes a person **sleepy** and it is because of this that you should not risk driving.

The effects of being tired are the same as a person who is drunk.

## Before boarding any public transport

Before entering any vehicle look at the driver to assess how he or she is. It may seem obvious but most people do not do this.

We can usually tell how someone is by looking at them and if they are drunk, sick, tired and sleepy you can see it on their face.

If you spot any of this, the driver **should not** be allowed to drive that vehicle.

I have heard stories after a road collision where passengers say that when they were boarding the vehicle, the driver appeared **drunk** or looked very **sleepy**.

Why did they not stop the driver from driving the vehicle?

Please **speak up** because by doing so, lives including yours will be saved.

**Driving should involve all the passengers in the vehicle for the safety of everyone.**

Passengers should not allow any driver to put their lives in danger. **It is your** human right to speak up if the driver is **speeding, overloading, driving recklessly, looks drunk, tired** or doing anything else that is dangerous.

If passengers do not **stop** these kind of drivers, they will bring a **stop** your life. It is as simple as that.

## Headlights ,Indicators & Wipers



Fig. 4

Just before you begin your journey, make sure that the signals, head lights, brakes lights , reverse lights are working.

Not indicating left or right can result into a catastrophic collision because the driver behind you, the one approaching you or a pedestrian will not know that you are turning in that direction or whether you are stopping.

Wipers are also very important and should be regularly tested to check that they are working properly because of the rain. If they do not work properly visibility will be very poor and this may cause a road accident.

**A simple vehicle check for less than 1 minute can prevent death or injury.**

## Weather, Rainy or Sunny



Fig.5

Before starting a journey the pedestrian, passenger and driver must keep informed on the weather.

The weather is so important that it can make all the difference mainly because of visibility or lack of visibility.

When it is misty or foggy it is usually impossible to see properly. So the driver must reduce speed to a minimum, put the headlights on in order to inform the other road users of their presence.

The same applies to rain and when it is very sunny especially when driving, riding, and walking towards the sun.

The driver must make sure that they shield themselves from direct sunlight either by wearing sunglasses, a hat, and putting on the sun flaps commonly known as Sun Visor in the car. Also, speed should be reduced due to poor visibility.

If it is raining, visibility will be poor. The road will be also very wet meaning that the **braking distance** will be longer because of the road being slippery. Please drive at minimal speed.

\*The same applies at **night**. Visibility reduces a lot. Always drive at the minimum required speed.

## Seatbelts, including Child Seats

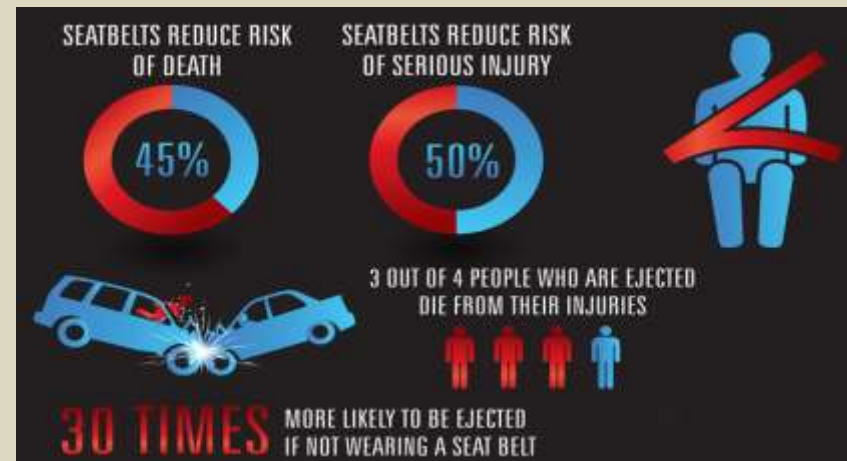


Fig. 6





Fig. 7



Fig. 8

**\*make sure you choose the right child seat for your car.**

Seat belts **Must be** worn at all times without exceptions when driving. It is literary the difference between preventing you from a serious injury or death.

**\*You are 8 times more likely to die in a car crash if you are not wearing your seat belt.**

## **Road markings, Signs and Traffic Rules**



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

There is no road in Kenya that does not have line markings and signs. This informs you which lane to stay in to overtake or not to, turnings etc.

It is the responsibility of the driver and passengers to know this.

Every road in Kenya has a speed limit which must be observed at all times. Please make sure you obey **ALL** traffic **RULES**.

What I am saying is that we must be disciplined in obeying all **traffic rules**. These rules are there for our safety.

**Caution** to all drivers driving to be very careful in new areas/routes/roads because you will not be aware of the road layout, speed bumps, sharp corners, crossings, road layout, any hazard etc.

***Always drive at a minimum speed in new areas.***

**Speeding -The No 1. killer on our roads!**



Fig. 11

Speeding is the major cause of road injuries and deaths. Every vehicle has a speed limit and also warning indicators when a dangerous speed is reached.

When a driver speeds a vehicle, it is important to note that controlling that vehicle will be a matter of chance.

If a driver is speeding and sees an emergency situation where he needs to stop immediately, it becomes an impossible task and the vehicle ends

up hitting another vehicle or rolling several times and ultimately causing injuries and deaths.

Speeding does not benefit anyone and it is **a lie** that one will arrive to their destination earlier than if the normal speed was observed.

If you were to choose to arrive at a destination 15 minutes earlier or compromise your safety and that of others, what would you do? Many have chosen to over speed and the outcome has been disastrous.

- **To stop speeding**

The driver has to make a conscious decision not to speed. Whether a personal vehicle or a public transport vehicle.

**\*Passengers need to be vocal and gather the courage to speak politely to the drivers of taxis, matatus, buses, boda bodas or train and remind them that they are speeding. It may surprise you that many drivers do not at times realise how fast they are driving.**

You may occasionally find rude drivers who may argue with you or even threaten to kick you out of the vehicle, but when it comes to your health and safety it is a small price to pay.

The more we Kenyans take a collective action of telling drivers and warning them of their speeds, the more it becomes a normal issue and so over time, it will be in drivers minds that they will be reminded to slow down when they speed.

Employers should also issue very strict penalties for their drivers who speed , the Government should also act tough i.e. cancellation of driving licenses and very long licence suspensions.

Studies have shown that the most people affected by road injuries and deaths are passengers over **80%**, as opposed to drivers who account to less than **20%**.

**The main responsibility is on the passengers. When you speak up, you save yourself, other passengers and other road users pedestrians included.**

This same approach should be applied to our **spouses, children and friends** when they are driving.

❖ ***Road users Prayer ; 'I promise to use the road safely today, I will not endanger other road users. Help me God'.***



## Drink Driving



Fig.12

I like giving an example of a **child driving a vehicle**. Most of you have shaken your heads or made faces. This is because it is a thought that you would not want to entertain. It is just not happening and it will not happen anywhere. This is because it does not make sense and it is very dangerous to the child and anyone else around.

A **drunk person** should not be considered as an **adult** when attempting to drive or when driving. Intoxication of **alcohol, recreational drugs or prescriptions drugs** severely impairs someone and their brain behaves exactly like a child.

Reality to them becomes blurred. They will not be aware of anything. This is why drunk people cause the most horrific road injuries and deaths as they are incapable of correctly using the machine we call a vehicle. It is

just impossible for a person to be above the drink driving limit and be in control of a motor vehicle.

## Solution

- If you plan to drink or find yourself drinking alcohol make arrangements for someone else to take you home. A friend or taxi.
- Friends, relatives, bar tenders should take the initiative to ensure that whenever they see someone drunk, they make certain that they do not drive at all. If you **intervene** before they get into their vehicle, you will ensure the safety all road users.
- You would rather spend 1000 shillings for your friend or relative to use a taxi to get home than give 5000 shillings for their funeral and remain with the torture of knowing you would have prevented their death and the deaths of others on the road on that fateful day you were with them.
- Kenyans! we must be honest with each other. A lot of our friends and relatives have died in roads simply because we didn't stop them from driving whilst drunk. Tell them sorry Mr. x or Ms x you are too drunk to drive, you aren't going to drive your car.
- Remember we are dealing with **preventing** road injuries and deaths. We must be pro-active. Most Kenyans who have lost friends or relatives regret not stopping them from driving that day. Well, we cannot change the past but we can learn from it and ensure that the same doesn't repeat itself today.

## Vehicle Maintenance



Fig. 13

We tend to take care of our bodies everyday through various ways. This is because we are well aware that in order to have a quality life, we have no choice but to ensure that our bodies are functioning the way they are supposed to.

We need to bring the same mind set when dealing with vehicles. Before we take any vehicle on the road, we must ensure that the vehicle is well maintained. That is, the regular checks up are up to date.

Vehicle servicing is very important because it ensures that any **damages**, **wear** and **tear** are addressed before injuring or killing someone.

**There are many vehicles that are not road worthy and should not be on our roads.**

Anytime you hear that a vehicles **brakes failed** or a **tyre bust**, it is usually as a result of the vehicle maintenance being ignored.

**Brakes don't just fail, tyres do not just burst, wheels don't just come off.**

As a passenger, how many times do you visually check whether the tyres of the vehicle you are about to enter are not **worn out** or **deflated**? what about the seats, are they **firmly fixed**. Are the **seat belts working**?

Remember the responsibility is yours. If you doubt the physical appearance of a vehicle before you enter it, is it worth pausing and finding another solution, and also reporting it to the driver, makanga, police, other passengers, or the Sacco involved.

### **Example**

A Container slid off a lorry and crushed on a vehicle with a mother and her children who were going home after school. All died on the spot. A family was wiped out because the driver had not bothered to check whether the container was securely fastened.

This story is personal because a Nurse friend of mine told me about this family. He and his colleagues attended to this family but they couldn't save them.

The family died because of **four safety pins** that were not in place. Can you imagine this? Just four metal pins and a **quick safety check!!!** which could have taken less than a minute.

If **vehicle maintenance** and **safety check** was done the driver of the lorry carrying containers should have known that without the metal pins to safely secure the container, the lorry should not have carried the container.

## Loud Music

On this point we can also talk about songs/music playing, you as a passenger should ensure that the volume of songs is not too high that you cannot even concentrate inside and also on what is happening outside.

Passengers have the right to travel without any noise. It is most safe for the driver and passengers because of concentration and awareness.

### Example

There was Mini-Bus that was hit by a train because the music was too loud. The driver did not hear the train coming while hooting loudly. Pedestrians and well wishers tried shouting to alert the driver but he did not hear them because of the very high noise levels.

Several passengers died including the driver and many are still nursing horrific injuries even as I write this.

It is very painful when you realise that these particular deaths and injuries could have been avoided 100% if this Mini Bus was not playing loud music/songs!.

Kenyans let us start **speaking up** to make it normal to request matatus and other public service vehicles to cut down on playing loud music/songs.

Passengers think it is **trendy** but it is a health and safety issue. Your goal is not to be trendy but to reach your destination safe and sound.

## Overloading Passengers & Cargo



Fig. 14

Every vehicle be it a lorry, bus, mini bus, matatus, personal car, boda boda comes with a legal weight limit.

A perfect example is a lift. When one gets into a lift, there is a big sign telling you the maximum number of people and weight that that lift can carry. Once you exceed this weight an alarm goes off warning you that the lift is in danger of crashing.

We should know that our **vehicles are the same**. If one exceeds that weight that the vehicle was built to carry, then one severely compromises the structural integrity of the vehicle and the entire operation of the vehicle.

We have seen all manner of vehicles crashing especially in corners, this is because the vehicle itself cannot handle the excess weight and gravity pulls the vehicle on one side making the vehicle roll, hitting other vehicles and pedestrians etc.

The brakes also won't work as supposed because they are meant to function within the specified speed and weight.

Many drivers have gambled with the physics of a vehicle, overloading it only to pay dearly with their lives and unfortunately with the lives of others.

The **solution** to this is to ensure that we do not overload the vehicles with passengers and cargo at all. *As a passenger*, if you are in a vehicle that is overloaded is it very important to **raise your voice and object to it**. The more we do, the more it becomes normal because we need to make the talk of health and safety on our roads normal.

### **Example of overloading**

A lady was driving around **12** people in her **4x4** vehicle which has a limit of **7** people. There was an excess of **5** people, because it was late, she was **speeding** to take family members from the family home to the bus stop after a family gathering.

The vehicle overturned because of **speeding** and **overloading** and killed 7 relatives and others were severely injured.

She compromised their health and safety with saving time. Maybe she could have taken another 1hr more to transport relatives to the bus stop and not one would have died or got injured.

There are **no short cuts** to our road health and safety.

It would have taken a relative to say, '**please so and so what you are attempting to do is not safe**'. Just saying that would have saved her relatives.

This topic has not captured our imagination the way it should but we are the generation to change it.

Remember health and safety on our roads is a choice.

❖ **Let us all choose to drive, ride and to walk safely.** 👍

## **Gadgets; Phones , Tablets. Also Eating ,Drinking, Reading when driving**



Fig. 15

The above man was pictured driving with both of his hands off the steering wheel.

Whatever message he got totally made him lose **concentration**.

Answering your phone or text, checking something on your tablet? ,This is a **no no!** why? You are distracted. Your concentration is **zero** and you are **not aware** of your surroundings.

Events on the road change **very very** fast so every second of your concentration is required for safe driving.

The same goes with eating or drinking.

Your eyes must be on the road and your hands must be on the steering wheel!.

There is no ifs and buts here.

**If you require to answer the phone, stop in a safe place and do so.**

If you require to eat, **stop in a safe place and eat**. It is very easy and simple.

Don't take chances because you might regret for the rest of your life.



## Heavy Goods Vehicles



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

When driving, please avoid being anywhere near these vehicles especially tankers because of the risk involved mainly the highly flammable cargo or heavy cargo normally the **containers** and other heavy goods.

Overtake when it is safe to do, or give these vehicles a chance to be far ahead of you and or way back to maintain a safe distance.

\* Please also note that because of how big these vehicles are they have **BLIND** spots which makes it impossible for the drivers to see smaller vehicles, motorbikes, bicycles and pedestrians.

**\*\*\* Please note that ONLY licensed Vehicles should carry flammable cargo like , petrol, paraffin, paint, alcohol, cleaning products, gas etc. \*\*\***

## Boda Bodas/Motorbikes



Fig. 18

Make sure that you and your passenger wear a safety helmet.

Please also know that wearing a helmet is not a **licence to speed**. If you crash when speeding the helmet may be of little help.

Observe safe speeds for your safety and the safety of your passenger and other road users.

## Bicycles



Fig. 19

The above woman is risking her life and the lives of her kids.

No one has a helmet, the bicycle is overloaded, she has a child on her back it is a disaster waiting to happen.

Parents please note; Children are also at risk of death or injury if they ride their bicycles without helmets.



Fig. 20

Studies have shown the use of helmets cuts the death rates by **50%** in motor bike accidents. And, **70%** cut in head injuries.

A safety helmet is a must!

## Pedestrians



Fig. 21

Please make sure that you walk on authorized areas. You should always choose a **walk path that is away from the road.**

We may think it is quicker to walk close to road, this may be the case but the risk of being knocked by a vehicle increases a lot.

Please always cross the road at safe crossing areas; bridges, zebra crossing and make sure you maintain **eye contact** with the driver as this ensures he /she is aware you are crossing the road.

Please do not risk crossing on a high way. Always use the foot bridge or safe passages. Many Kenyans have been killed or severely injured by crossing across the highway because it looks quicker than using a foot bridge. Don't pay with your life.



Fig 22.

It is very unfortunate that our children are forced to take these risks with their lives.

**\*\*\* All schools should make a habit of reminding their pupils about road safety when attending school or when on holidays. \*\*\***

Our children should not be allowed to gamble with their lives!.

## First Aid Kit, Fire extinguisher, Fire Blanket and Vehicle Breakdown Kit



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25

Though no one starts their journey expecting a collision, injury or death, the reality is that it may happen.

It is therefore very important to be prepared in case it happens.

A **First Aid** Kit is very important to attend to the injured person/s.

A **Fire Extinguisher** to stop any fire after a collision.

A **Fire Blanket** to stop any fire in the vehicle or a person.

The **Vehicle Breakdown Kit** to alert drivers on both sides that your vehicle has broken down meaning that they have to slow down.

*Please also have several telephone numbers of emergencies services and police on your phone because having them may be the difference between life or death when a road collision or breakdown happens.*

**\*\*\* WHEN YOUR VEHICLE BREAKS DOWN, PUT YOUR HAZARD LIGHTS ON, PUT A HAZARD SIGN BEHIND YOUR VEHICLE, LEAVE YOUR VEHICLE AND STAY AWAY AT A SAFE DISTANCE AND ALERT THE POLICE AND THE BREAKDOWN SERVICES IMMEDIATELY \*\*\***

## ***Summary:***

**All vehicle crashes/accidents can be explained. There is always a reason/s that cause them.**

We have seen that breaking any one of the reasons causes deaths and injuries in our roads.

Unfortunately there are drivers who go against several factors as discussed and the results are catastrophic.

## ***Example***

Drivers will **overload**, **speed**, ignore the weather(**raining**) and it is at **night**, no passengers with **seat belts** on and carry **flammable cargo** also,

**Operating the vehicle incorrectly** - when driving downhill, switching off the engine to save fuel. Brakes will not work properly as more force will be required on the brakes pedal. Many drivers realise it when it is terribly late. The **Steering Wheel** may also **LOCK** making your vehicle drive in one direction.

Many Kenyans have been killed and injured this way. **Power Brakes** work properly when the **engine** is **on**. Please do not risk with people's lives by trying to save some few hundred shillings this way.



## Recent tragedies



Fig. 26

Several innocent pupils died in this crash. But what caused it? The driver was;

- Speeding
- The pupils did not have seat belts on
- The driver ignored the fact it was at night (very poor visibility)
- Was speeding and overtaking
- Most probably was tired and sleepy.

The reality is, the driver was driving carelessly



Fig. 27

### The driver;

- overloaded the bus with passengers and cargo
- was speeding
- no passengers had seat belts on
- ignored it was at night (very poor visibility)
- most probably he was tired and sleepy
- did not listen when passengers told him to slow down.

In the above 'accidents', there was a clear violation of several factors that lead to these deaths and injuries.



I will make a shocking but true statement.

*Looking at the state of the bus (Fig. 27) after this crash, most specifically the seats, if these passengers had seat belts on many of them would not have died.*

The only thing they would have sustained are non-fatal injuries.

Please note that I am not saying 100% that these are the reasons that caused these accidents. There could have been other factors like poor vehicle servicing, deflated tyres etc.

**\*\*\* Our Government, Private Companies, Saccos should ensure that all Vehicles on our Roads are fitted with SEAT BELTS and strictly used at ALL TIMES \*\*\***


As I stated earlier I have not ignored the responsibility of the Government including the County Governments and all the departments mandated to deal with this matter.

In this particular book, I want to emphasise the **participation of passengers, drivers and the public** to take **Road Safety** in their hands. We use the roads daily therefore the responsibility is on us to be safe.

***In remembrance to all Kenyans who have died on our roads and those injured.***

***A special Thank You to all Government Officials who work tirelessly to keep us safe on our Roads.***

***To all our Health Services thank you very much for always being there to treat Kenyans involved in road accidents, you have saved many lives.***

***Last but not least to the Spirit of all Kenyans who are the first to rush to a scene of a road accident and selflessly help their fellow Kenyans without asking which tribe they come from. ( May this Love and Care Never Stop ).*** 

**Thank you very much for reading. Share as much as you can.**

-----images used-----

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Fig.2 krb.go.ke.com

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Fig.27 independent.co.uk/news/world/kenya-bus-crash

(all images are from google images)

This is a free online book.

I am working on the Kiswahili version of this book.

My goal is to have this book translated in as many languages as possible in order for all Kenyans to have access to this information.

We only have one KENYA. We are Kenya and therefore must build a safe and healthy environment on our roads for all of us.

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